

INTRODUCTION



Introduction

The South Valley and Southwest Mesa are characterized by their rural qualities. Within the valley area, agricultural lands are the primary landscape that is admired by many who live within the community and outside the area. The mesa top is open, most of it undisturbed, and defined by its steep sandy escarpments and its prominent eastern edge (or ceja).

There are other physical features that make the south valley and adjacent mesas unique. Isleta Boulevard, part of the historic Camino Real, and the original village centers testify to the long history of the area, pre-dating the founding of the City of Albuquerque. The irrigation ditches and the bosque are features that enhance the rural environment. All of these physical features greatly contribute to the identity of the area, and are also endangered from the pressures of urban growth.

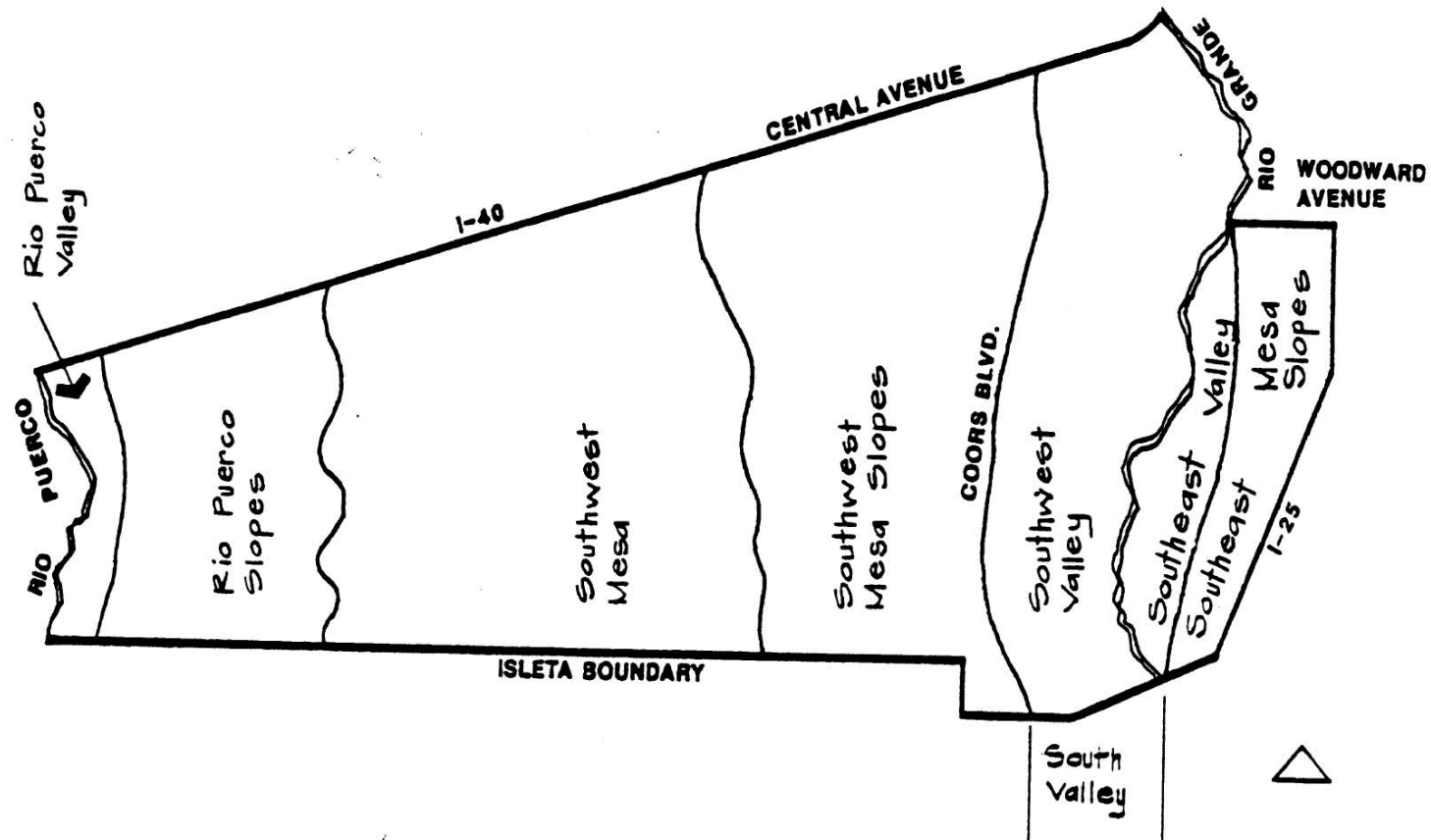
Physical Setting

The Plan area covers 115 square miles. Approximately 9 square miles are located within Albuquerque's municipal limits. The plan boundaries are Central Avenue and Interstate 40 to the north, the Rio Puerco on the west, and Isleta Pueblo lands on the south. Interstate 25 south of Woodward Road to Broadway Boulevard on the south, and the Rio Grande north of Woodward Road are its eastern boundaries.

The Plan area can be divided into three major geologic formations: the flood plains, the mesa slopes and the mesa. The flood plains include both the Rio Puerco and the Rio Grande valley floors. The mesa slopes lie to the east of the Rio Puerco flood plain, both east and west of the Rio Grande flood plain. The Southwest Mesa is the high, nearly flat area, between the mesa slopes east of the Rio Puerco and west of the Rio Grande.

The Rio Grande has been, and still is, an important feature of the valley. The Rio Grande flood plain has been formed over many centuries by the flow of the river alternately cutting and depositing soils from higher areas of the Rio Grande and its tributaries. The Rio Grande once meandered throughout the flood plain, and is now confined within the levees. Studies have shown that the Rio Grande provides wildlife habitat for nesting, breeding and feeding birds, mammals, and acts as a migratory corridor. For over a thousand years, from the earliest Pueblo settlements to the present time people have settled adjacent to the Rio Grande, and established ditches to bring water from the river to their crops. Today, people still live adjacent to the river and continue to use the river for agricultural purposes.

Geographic Sub Areas of Southwest Plan Area



Purpose of the Plan Update

The Bernalillo County Commission and the Albuquerque City Council adopted the first Southwest Area Plan (SWAP) in 1988. Since its adoption, very little of the plan has been implemented. The intent of SWAP is to create a living document that will continue to encourage community involvement, including the participation of the public and private sectors, and non-profit organizations, in order to implement the various policies and action strategies.

The plan update takes a comprehensive approach to shape the community more effectively, and to avoid potential costly mistakes, which may unnecessarily burden Bernalillo County taxpayers. This comprehensive approach emphasizes physical planning, including the connection between land use, transportation, natural resources, environmental protection, economic development, and their relationship to the residents of the South Valley and the adjacent Southwest and southeast Mesa areas.

Physical, social, and environmental planning are interrelated and should not be addressed separately. Therefore, in order to create a better community the Southwest Area Plan looks at the planning elements as a whole. To accomplish this, the Southwest Area Plan update includes two new sections: human resources and community economic development. These sections were added to fulfill the comprehensive approach this plan update has taken.

The Planning Process

Citizen participation has been an integral part of this plan update. Neighborhood associations, area residents (including young and old), property owners and business people worked together to identify issues, concerns, quality of life objectives and implementation strategies (See Appendix D for the list of public participation meetings).

This process was a "bottom-up" approach based on the input of many people over a long period of time and reflects the ideas and desires of the citizens. In order for their recommendations to be carried out, the Technical Steering Committee, composed of staff members of County, City and other agencies, provided assistance by identifying how to implement the citizens' recommendations within the parameters of their department's regulations.

The Citizen Steering Committee was composed of representatives of neighborhood associations, property owners of large and small areas, business owners, and concerned South Valley residents. This committee played a important role from the beginning to the end of this plan update, and will continue to play an important role as the plan is being implemented and followed. This Citizen Steering Committee identified issues in the South Valley and then developed the Quality of Life statements and reviewed the policies and implementation strategies. The policies and strategies were further refined by staff, and presented again to the citizenry as well as to the Technical Steering Committee for their review.

In addition to the involvement of the Citizen Steering Committee, meetings and interviews were held with senior citizens and with youth groups of the area. These two groups identified their own issues and what they felt were important for the South Valley. Each of these groups, the senior citizens, young people and the Citizen Steering Committee identified many concerns, such as the need to protect and promote agricultural land uses and to expand job opportunities.

The Population

The South Valley and the adjacent mesas are one of the fastest growing areas in Bernalillo County. This growth can be seen with the rising numbers of subdivisions within the valley floor and on the mesa slope near Westgate. Based on the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments (MRGCOG) estimates the population in the plan area is projected to increase by approximately 8,800, from 82,145 in 1999 to more than 91,000 in 2010.

1999-2010 Projections
Population, Housing, and Employment by CPA*
For the Southwest Area Plan

	1999	2010
Population	82,145	91,046
Housing		
** Single Family	22,555	30,335
Multi-Family	2672	4162
Employment		
Agriculture	126	132
Construction	2384	3241
Manufacturing	2822	3296
TCU	1551	2276
Wholesale	1423	2005
Retail	4275	6341
FIRE	473	674
Services & Misc.	2718	4110
Government	4054	5610
Total Employment	19,826	27,685

* Community Planning Areas
 Southwest Mesa
 South Valley
** Excludes Mobile Homes
TCU- Transportation
 Commercial
 Utilities
FIRE-Finance
 Insurance
 Real Estate

Source: Urban Growth Projections 1999-2010

Employment growth is projected to increase from 19,826 in 1999 to approximately 27,600 in 2010. With expected growth on the Southwest Mesa slope area, the plan area will see above average employment growth in retail trade, government, and service type employment.